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ABSTRACT

Results of a national survey of middle school certification requirements/standards are presented. The most common definition of "middle school" elicited was: "a school distinctively organized and administered as a middle school with a combination of grade levels five or six through eight." Eleven states reported no official definition; three of these stated that the middle school lacked legal status. Special middle school certification requirements for teachers were reported by 14 states; one of these required special certification for middle school administrators. A summary of these state requirements is given. Thirteen states reported action in developing such requirements for middle school teachers; four of these reported development of special administrator requirements as well. Of the 27 states reporting middle school certification or proposals for the same, 17 indicated the participation of teachers and administrators in the formulation of the requirements. (MJB)

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MIDDLE SCHOOL CERTIFICATION -- A National Update

The rapid growth of the middle school organization has served to spotlight the long standing issue of professional preparation for the middle school grades. Recent efforts by some states to develop middle school certification requirements have further clouded this issue by the noteable lack of uniformity of the resulting special certification programs.

In an effort to research the effectiveness of special middle school certification programs, I discovered that there had been no definitive update of the current status of middle school certification since the 1975 survey conducted by Paul S. George.[1] To this end I surveyed the 50 state departments of education to determine the extent to which special middle school certification requirements have been established. The first survey question dealt with the state definition and/or criteria for the middle school. The most common response being "a school distinctively organized and administered as a middle school with a combination of grade levels five or six through eight" with some states including grade levels as low as four and as high as nine. Some eleven states reported no official definition or criteria for the middle school with three of these (Illinois, Mississippi, and Tennessee) stating the school organization also lacked legal status.

SP012 417

Questions two and three of the survey dealt with special certification for middle school teachers and administrators. Special middle school teacher certification was reported by fourteen states (Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Texas) with only the state of Kentucky indicating special certification for middle school administrators.

The specific course work, compentencies, and/or experience requirements for middle school certification are summerized as follows:

MIDDLE SCHOOL CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Arkansas	Elementary certified teachers may obtain middle school certification (5-9) with 18 hours in subject area. Secondary certified may obtain middle school certification (5-9) with 3 hours in child psychology, 3 hours in middle school methods, and 18 hours in subject area.
Colorado	Approved specialization in middle school education to include: 1) major academic preparation; 2) history, philosophy, and principles of the middle school; 3) middle schcol methods; 4) evaluation and accountability in the middle school.
Florida	Specialized middle school degree program--elementary and secondary extension by one year experience and successful performance in the prescribed middle school components of an approved inservice master plan.
Indiana	Specialized junior high/middle school program of study for grades 5-9 in a departmentalized situation is included in state colleges. Elementary or secondary extension is approved upon completion of 15 additional hours.

	Courses include: 1) curriculum for junior high/middle schools; 2) adolescent psychology; 3) methods and 4) directed electives (2 courses); 5) and 18 hours in subject area.
Iowa	Specialized middle school certificate for grades 4-9. Elementary certification is extended through grade 8.
Kentucky	Specialized middle school teacher and administrator certification program of study for grades 5-9. Conversion plans provide for extension of existing elementary and secondary certificates.
Michigan	Elementary and secondary certificates may be extended to middle school grades 5-9 with 18 hours of approved study.
Minnesota	Specialized middle school degree program--elementary and secondary extension by 24 quarter hours. Courses include: 1) middle school philosophy and organization; 2) psychology; 3) special learning and behavior problems; 4) teaching experience; 5) reading; 6) subject matter courses.
Nebraska	Elementary and secondary extension to middle school grades 4-9 with two years middle grade experience and approved course work through August, 1978. After August, 1978 a specialized middle school degree program will be required for grades 4-9.
North Carolina	Specialized middle certificate for grades 4-9.
Ohio	Teachers certified for middle schools upon recommendation of the Superintendent and upon completion of elementary course work.
Rhode Island	Elementary certified teachers may obtain middle school certification (5-8) with additional 12 hours in subject area, adolescent psychology, and middle school methods or curriculum. Secondary certified may obtain middle school certification (5-8) by completing an additional 6 hours in child psychology and elementary or middle school methods.

South Carolina — Specialized middle school curriculum is included in state colleges. Extension for both elementary and secondary requires 9 hours including the teaching of reading.

Texas — Junior high certification 6-10 and Earth-Life Science middle school certification based on specialized degree program.

It should be noted that even in those states which have specific middle school certification, provisions generally allow the teacher with elementary certification to teach grades five and six when self-contained in the middle school and the teacher with secondary certification to teach grades seven and eight in a subject area specialty.

In response to the question on proposed certification requirements for middle school teachers and administrators, thirteen states (Alabama, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming reported efforts in the direction of teacher certification with Colorado, Iowa, Utah, and West Virginia also working toward the development of certification for the middle school administrator.

To date a total of 27 states have established middle school certification requirements or report proposals for such certification. The magnitude of these numbers can be better appreciated by reviewing a similar survey conducted by Philip Pumerantz in 1968 which revealed that only the states of Kentucky and Nebraska had official middle school certification with nine other states listed in the planning process.[2]

Finally, a question to which eleven state departments declined to respond concerned provisions for teachers, administrators, and/or organizations of the same to participate in the determinations of certification requirements. To this question 18 states replied in the affirmative and explained the form of participation, 5 simply responded "yes", and the remaining 16 responded in the negative. Thus in at least 16 states and possibly as many as 38 states, certification for teachers and administrators is out of the hands of those people who are best qualified through experience and education to make decisions concerning the professional preparation of those persons entering the field of education.

Of the 27 states which reported middle school certification or proposals for the same, 17 indicated the participation of teachers and administrators in the formulation of those requirements. It hardly seems accidental that those states in which the teachers and administrators have an organized voice in the determination of certification requirements are also the leaders in the development of specialized certification for the middle school.

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[1]Philip Pumerantz. "Few States Certify Teachers for Growing Middle Schools." Phi Delta Kappan: 102; October 1969.

[2]George, Paul S. "Middle School Teacher Certification: A National Survey," Educational Leadership: 215; December 1975.

RESPONDENT: Name _____
Title _____
Telephone _____
Address _____
_____

If your response to any of the questions is Yes, then please complete the explanation section of that question.

1. Specific definition and/or criteria for the Middle School. Yes___ No___
Explain _____

2. Special certification or endorsement for Middle School Teachers. Yes___
No___ Explain _____

3. Special certification or endorsement for Middle School Administrators.
Yes___ No___ Explain _____

4. Provisions for teachers and administrators with elementary and/or secondary certification to work with the Middle School. Yes___ No___ Explain_____

5. Specific coursework, compentencies, and/or experience as an inservice requirement for the Middle School
(a) Teacher. Yes___ No___ Explain _____

(b) Administrator. Yes___ No___ Explain _____

6. Provisions for teachers, administrators, and/or organizations of the same to participate in the determination of certifications requirements. Yes___
No___ Explain _____

7. Proposed requirements for Middle School Teacher and/or Administrator certification if none currently exist. Yes___ No___ Explain _____

Please furnish the name and address of two randomly selected Middle Schools in your state which may be contacted for local input concerning Middle School Certification. (Write none if the Middle School organization is not present in your state.)

_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

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